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ABSTRACT

Communication in written and oral discourse can be enhanced by cohesive devices, linguistic structures independent of grammar. One cohesive device is that of enumeration or listing. In French, the means of expressing enumeration include such structures as: "avant...puis.../d'une part...d'autre part.../enfin.../ensuite..." and in idiolectal use, "sinon." Cohesive devices are most common in certain text types, including editorials, speeches, and summaries in which the author is seeking to convince or persuade, or where the devices are required to express underlying coherence with maximum clarity in limited time or space. Other enumerative devices include: (1) "egalement, quant a, ainsi" to indicate sequence and example; (2) "premier point, d'autre part, enfin" for triple enumeration; (3) "precisons d'abord que/ajoutons a cela que, en principe/en realite" to indicate contradistinction; (4) temporal devices such as "autrefois/aujourd'hui, pour certains/pour d'autres"; (5) "tout d'abord, quant au, cependant" for listing points of information; and (6) "pour ce qui est du/tandis que" for separation of information into discrete units or for contrast. Analysis of these devices is informative for second language students. A variety of exercises can be used for identifying, classifying, and practicing the devices. (MSE)

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Communicative Skills Acquisition: a recommended resource

The communication process may be enhanced by the use of certain linguistic resources which are independent of grammatical structures and which are capable of involving any length of text. These resources may have a vital role in the conveying or understanding of an argument. This paper will examine certain of the resources, their function/s, and various common features. It will consider one resource in detail, namely, the expression of enumeration. Since the initial reason for the study was to determine the pedagogical usefulness and scope of this particular area in communicative skills, the paper concludes with some suggestions of ways of sensitising students to their recognition and use.

It is frequently the case that despite attainment of a certain standard or level in school leaving certificate examinations, English-speaking students of languages remain unable, or are ill-equipped, either to create a structured text or to discern the structure of a text, and this in both mother tongue and foreign languages. It may be considered that a text can rely for its structure on thematic resources, that is on the presence of a lexical field, or fields, alone, provided the theme or themes are not randomly addressed. However, for compelling practical reasons such as advanced academic standards or professional requirements, it is advisable to be able to call on other resources, either in recognition or in production. There is no reason why English-speaking students should not have such resources at their command, and be able increasingly not merely to use

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them in their normal acceptation, but also to recognise deviant uses. Creating and discerning the structure of a text, by which is meant oral or written discourse exhibiting a logical progression of ideas as, for instance, in a formal speech, interpreting, a report, a summary, or an essay, can be achieved by the use of certain alternative resources, which are known by various names in English and in French. [1]

For present purposes, I shall refer to them simply as cohesive devices. These devices are to be distinguised from structural textual resources, that is resources which are incorporated within sentences and are the expression of semantic relations between clauses. Such resources are more correctly described as constituting elements of syntax and grammar, rather than as being independent of grammatical structures and not bound by a single sentence.

Since cohesive devices are independent of grammatical structures, and since they may involve a length of text beyond the sentence, it might be inferred that they are non-essential textual elements. To a certain extent, this is true: communication is possible without them. Indeed, communication is possible without words. Yet, in the context of advanced, effective communication, oral and written, academic, professional and social, in mother tongue and in foreign languages, there is a substantial case for including them as an efficient method of expressing and of discerning the logic of argument. This does not of course imply that a text is necessarily without logic if the devices are not explicit.

The devices in question are words and phrases such as yet, indeed, for instance ... which have a precise function in the argument. They may be polyvalent and consequently context-dependent for meaning, or idiolectal, or have a short-lived, synchronic semantic value. In other words, rigid taxonomies would be particularly inappropriate for these language resources.

It is when one attempts to create a taxonomy of such devices, for pedagogical purposes for example, that the richness of their reference becomes apparent. If, for instance, one wanted to create categories according to their function or functions, one could use labels such as concession, reservation, contrast, refutation, agreement and so on. It might well be modelled on functional classifications such as those of Vigner, or Bloch and Tomaszkiewicz.[8] However, it would be advisable to work with a list of functions which is fairly flexible for the following reasons. It would quickly become apparent that there are various devices which are classifiable under more than one functional label. Distinctions between functions are not always clear, nor are they always sufficiently justified. Considerable overlap of meaning may occur of seemingly disparate or even contradictory devices. For example, concession may include an element of refutation, or agreement introduce a reservation:

> ... Obtenir aussi du Conseil le financement de la Communauté pendant la période transitoire. Certes, l'arrangement financier qui nous est proposé en guise de budget rectificatif et les conditions de sa présentation provoquent une légitime émotion.

> Mérite-t-elle de livrer aujourd'hui la bataille de demain? Je ne le pense pas. La responsabilité des gouvernements quant à l'exécution du budget 1987 est engagée.[3]
>
> ... Ces établissements ont été créés en 1960 pour répondre à une volonté de formation professionnelle pratique et pas seulement académique, et se sont multipliés. On en compte aujourd'hui environ 70. Certes, les étudiants effectuent des stages dans l'industrie, mais les resultats sont moins convaincants sur le marché du travail.[4]

In the first example, certes expresses agreement or affirmation, but it also anticipates the refutation which comes in Je ne le pense pas. In the second, certes is concessive, and the following mais introduces a reservation. Such polyvalent devices require a measure of context to determine their precise meaning. Generally, when two or more meanings are carried by the device, or set of devices, one is predominant, the other/s implicit.

On the other hand, there are certain functions which can be expressed by means of a variety of cohesive devices. Enumeration, or listing, for example, may be made explicit through the use of d'abord, puis, ensuite, enfin or by a selection from these, or by a combination of one or two of these and a selection from other enumerative groups such as d'une part, d'autre part. Such combinations serve to illustrate the flexibility of use that is both possible and acceptable with the devices. They serve, in addition, as a reminder that notions of predictability in language, while reassuring for the professional linguist, are not entirely dependable.

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Means of expressing enumeration [5]

avant ... puis ... / certains ... les autres ... / d'une part ... d'autre part ... / d'une part ... par ailleurs ... / enfin ... / ensuite ... / ensuite ... enfin ... / il s'agit de ... par contre .../ il s'agit de ... par contre ... / le premier ... le second ... enfin, le troisième ... / par la suite ... / pour ce qui est du ... tandis que ... / pour certains que ... pour d'autres que ... / précisons d'abord que ... ajoutons à cela que ... / puis ... / quant à ... / tant ... que ... / tout d'abord ... / tout d'abord ... ensuite ... enfin ... / tout d'abord ... puis ... enfin ... / tout d'abord ... quant au ... cependant ... / votre premier point ... d'autre part ... enfin ...

Turning briefly to idiolectal uses, a recent oral example encountered has been the use of sinon, which occurred in a liaison interpreting class at the beginning of the present academic year. It seemed slightly odd because it did not have any of the familiar functions which are attributed to it in standard dictionaries that is, the expression of exception, concession, restriction.[6]

> ... Si l'un des candidats réunit plus de la moitié des suffrages exprimés au premier tour, il est élu. Sinon, on procède à un second tour. Il en est de même pour l'élection des députés à l'Assemblée Nationale et pour les Conseils généraux, c'est-à-dire les élections cantonales.

> ... Il donne son avis sur la nomination des magistrats et statue comme conseil de discipline pour ces mêmes magistrats; sinon bien sûr la Haute Cour de Justice et ses 24 juges qui peuvent être appelés à juger le Président de la République ou les membres du gouvernement ...

Clearly, the function of sinon in the second example is that of an enumerating, or listing, device. It has occurred frequently, usually preceding the final item in a list. Commenting on it, the lecteur cautioned against this particular use. However, views of several other native speakers support it. Thus one really must adopt a flexible approach not only concerning any classification in terms of functions, but also concerning the devices themselves, which are quite frequently polyvalent.

Before returning in detail to the most common of the devices, that is the set, or sets, which express enumeration, their polyvalence, and their ability to be combined with other devices, it is worth pausing to note the type of text and context in which cohesive devices have a high frequency of occurrence and of which the main purpose is argumentation or exposition, rather than description. Such contexts are likely to be editorials, speeches, summaries ... with a controversial theme and in which the author is seeking to convince, persuade, dissuade ... or where, in the case of a summary, cohesive devices are required to express the underlying coherence of a statement with maximum clarity in a limited time or space.

The six examples which follow illustrate enumerative devices and other incidental devices, in context.

In the first example également announces a second or third point in the argument and quant à a subsequent point. Ainsi indicates that an example is provided.

> ... ce sont les catégories commerçants et artisans, professions libérales et agriculteurs qui sont surtout représentées. Il convient également de noter une différence en fonction des régions. Ainsi, l'ouest de la France, traditionnellement religieux, a beaucoup d'écoles privées.
> Quant à votre deuxième question, je crois pouvoir répondre par l'affirmative dans la mesure où ....

In the next example, triple enumeration is expressed by premier point, d'autre part and enfin. Within the enumerative framework, the speaker provides a contrastive argument following en revanche, and a concession introduced by certes.

> ... Votre premier point concernant la résistance des enseignants à la volonté gouvernementale de fabriquer davantage d'ingénieurs, d'entrepreneurs et de travailleurs spécialisés par exemple est aussi vrai en France. En revanche, les problèmes diffèrent dans le contexte de la classe proprement dite. Certes, la revendication salariale existe également mais surtout pour les instituteurs. D'autre part, vous savez sans doute que les enseignants n'assurent pas les tâches hors emploi-du-temps de surveillance, d'étude, etc ... qui sont prises en charge par des surveillants nommés par l'Education Nationale. Enfin, à la différence des Britanniques, je crois, les enseignants français doivent faire face au problème des effectifs trop nombreux ...

Thirdly, enumeration is denoted by précisons d'abord que and ajoutons à cela que. This particular example contains in addition the familiar contradistinctive pair en principe / en réalité - dear to a French mind - denoting the speaker's veiled rejection as fictional of a generally held conviction, followed by an affirmation of what he believes to be reality. Enumeration and contradistinction are linked by par conséquent which (a) is resultative following the second point ajoutons à cela que and (b), contiguous with en réalité, forges a link between fiction and fact.

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> ... Pour ce qui est du choix de l'université, en principe, je dis bien en principe, la seule condition est d'être titulaire du bac. Ceci dit, précisons d'abord que très peu d'étudiants reçoivent des bourses, car celles-ci sont attribuées en fonction d'un barème qui tient compte du revenu des parents et du nombre de personnes à charge. Ajoutons à cela qu'il n'y a qu'un nombre limité de chambres universitaires qui vont en priorité aux étudiants boursiers. Par conséquent, en réalité, de nombreux étudiants français habitent chez leurs parents ...

In the fourth example, temporal devices impose an enumerative structure on the discourse, autrefois, aujourd'hui, as do the contrastive pair pour certains, pour d'autres.

> ... Depuis la loi Debré de 1959, l'enseignement privé (religieux ou non) cohabite avec l'enseignement public. Autrefois, les parents plaçaient leurs enfants dans des établissements privés par conviction religieuse. Aujourd'hui, les raisons invoquées varient selon les gens: pour certains, les écoles privées sont plus petites et donc entretiennent davantage le contact avec les parents, pour d'autres, la discipline y est plus respectée, les professeurs plus stimulés et moins enclins à se mettre en grève ...

In the penultimate example, tout d'abord, quant au and, to a certain extent, cependant perform a listing function. In the case of cependant, the predominant function is that of introducing a concession, but it also introduces a third point of information.

> ... Je répondrai tout d'abord à cette dernière question: on a évolué naturellement vers la mixité, et le phénomène de séparation 'Ecole de Filles' / 'Ecole de Garçons' que j'ai moi-même connu dans le primaire est maintenant tout à fait exceptionnel. Quant au pensionnat, il a tendance aussi à se raréfier. Cependant, un bon nombre d'écoles privées sont encore des pensionnats ...

Finally, the use of pour ce qui est du suggests a separation of information into discrete units. This is confirmed in the tandis que which introduces a contrastive comparison and, in

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this case, the second point.

> ... Le gouvernement a consacré en 1986 environ 15,7% de son budget à l'éducation. Pour ce qui est du corps enseignant, les écoles primaires et secondaires regroupent près de 600 000 enseignants, tandis que les universitaires sont au nombre de 42 000 ...

These several examples have touched primarily on enumeration - a fundamental and frequent resource in the structuring of argument. The expression of enumeration has been achieved through chronological devices, it has been supplemented by inclusion of devices denoting concession, refutation and so on. Some devices have been shown to be polyvalent, and there is a striking example of a very French refutation followed by the presentation of the truth - as the speaker sees it. Analysis of these devices can be an informative and rewarding exercise, revealing as it does the measure of coherence - or lack of coherence - in a text.

Exercises which may be introduced to sensitise students to the occurrence and usefulness of cohesive devices in oral and written texts, in mother tongue and foreign language.

- identify the device/s and indicate the function/s with reference to the text in question.
- classify the device/s, recording context, source and date.
- practise summaries, indicating by use of devices the argumentation of the original texts.
- develop a plan or structure for a given essay title, debate etc, using controversial, and, wherever possible, topics familiar to students.
- identify and develop situations in which students are

required to argue a point, provide details, clarify, persuade, summarise, conclude ... .

- complete texts from which devices have been removed.
- remove devices from a text, arrange sentences in an order different from the original, then ask students to reconstruct the text and provide cohesive devices.
- practise note-taking, gist-extraction .... i.e. exercises which require devices for adequate text reconstruction.
- in cases where devices are ambivalent, explain the ambivalence and suggest unambiguous substitutes.
- identify devices which are non-structural and those which are structural, then match them where possible.

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[1] The following are some of the labels used for the resources: articulateurs logiques, articulations linguistiques, connecteurs interphrastiques/phrastiques, connecteurs de l'argumentation; cohesive devices, discourse markers, pragmatic connectives.

[2] Communicative functional classifications. The following are a selection of useful classifications: G. Vigner. Parler et convaincre pp. 2-3. approbation, concession, désapprobation, dissuasion, exemplification, explication, illustration, persuasion, protestation; A. Bloch .... and Tomaszkiewicz. Stratégies pour une pédagogie de l'argumentation en f.l.e. p.34. chronologie, concession, déduction, démonstration, illustration, mise au point, opposition, persuasion, référence, résumé, temporalité ; See also G-D. de Salins. De l'Exercice de lecture à la pratique de l'argumentation. Same journal as above, p.81; B.T. Atkins and H.A. Lewis. The Mechanics of the Argument/Les Mécanismes de la discussion in Collins-Robert French-English English-French Dictionary. London, Glasgow and Toronto: Collins (1987).

[3] From a speech by M. D'Ormesson in the European Parliament 8.7.87.

[4] Unless otherwise indicated, examples are taken from liaison interpreting materials devised by M. Lang and I. Harris.

[8] From the chapter on Education in the liaison interpreting materials, Lang and Harris.

[9] The Collins-Robert French Dictionary, 1987 and Le Petit Robert, 1986 offer three acceptations: sauf, si ce n'est, autrement.

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